THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • TUESDAY • JULY 21, 2020 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 18 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianexpress twitter.com/newindianexpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

INDIA HOLDS NAVAL DRILL WITH U.S. AMID TENSIONS WITH CHINA

Navies of India and the US carried out a swift exercise close to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on Monday

NIMITZ SUPERCARRIER TAKES PART

The exercise involved a US Navy strike force, led by supercarrier USS Nimitz CVN-68, which was returning after a deployment to the South China Sea. From the Indian side, warships of the Eastern Naval Command and the Andaman and Nicobar Command took part in the quick drill whose aim was to boost coordination between forces of the two countries

INDIA STEPS UP MILITARY DIPLOMACY

- It comes as India seeks to strengthen its military diplomacy through the Navy to take on Chinese expansionism in the seas
- For instance, India has expressed its readiness to include Australia in the upcoming Malabar naval exercises, alongside the US and Japan, despite strong objection from Beijing

Nimitz

IS A CLASS OF NUCLEAR-POWERED U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TRICHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Govt comes out with white paper on Covid spend

Details of procurement by Health Dept released on Monday, but not those made by BBMP, Medical Education, Social Welfare Depts

ANUSHA RAVI @Bengaluru

FOLLOWING Congress' allegations of misappropriation of funds in the procurement of Covid-19 equipment, the Karnataka Health Ministry on Monday released a white paper on the procurement process, expenditure and reasons for price differences, over five months.

Health Minister B Sriramulu said he would quit from his post, if opposition leader in the Assembly Siddaramaiah can prove allegations of corruption.

The Health Ministry said that the government was spending only Rs 10.61 crore for ventilators as against the allegation of Rs 18.20 crore expenditure. While the state is slated to receive 1,600 ventilators from the central government under the PM Cares Scheme free of cost, of which 640 have arrived, it has spent Rs 10.61 crore on 130 standard ventilators from the Mysuru-based company, Skanray, at Rs 5.60 lakh per piece. Of them, 80 have been delivered, while another 28 higher-specification ICU ventilators, whose prices vary from Rs 11 lakh to Rs 18.20 lakh, have been ordered at a cost of Rs 33 crore.

"In March, the sanitiser was priced at Rs 250 for 500 ml, as the demand was high and supply low. But now, it is just Rs 100. In April, we paid Rs 1,444 per PPE piece, and now we pay Rs 575 due to reduced prices and increased manufacturing. When the procurement began in the first week of March, Covid was a new disease and there was no production of any equipment like PPE and N95 masks in the state or country," said Jawaid Akhtar, Additional Chief Secretary. In March, N95 masks were sold at Rs 147 per piece and in April, it was sourced at Rs 126 per piece from a company in China. The price has further reduced to Rs 44 per piece now, the department said.

Countering the Congress' allegations of corruption in the tendering and procurement process, Dy CM Dr C N Ashwath Narayan let the Karnataka State Drugs Logistics and Warehousing Society clear the air. "For initial procurements, we contacted our regular suppliers who come under our L1 category to buy sanitisers and drugs," said N Manjushree, Additional Director, KSDLWS. P4

> It is an exercise to hide facts than presenting proof with accurate data. Ministers have said that quality & technological capabilities are the reasons for huge price difference. Does it mean ventilators under PM Cares lack quality? Why did they not present the technical specifications to justify the same?"
>
> Siddaramaiah, leader of Opposition in Assembly

Daily wage labourers and homeless people line up to get food, in front of Victoria Hospital in Bengaluru on Monday | PARDHANATH B

KARNATAKA COVID-19 BATTLE

3,648 Test positive on Monday

72 FATALITIES ON MONDAY

TOTAL CASES 67,420

1,403 Total deaths

23,795 Total recoveries so far

Even as positive cases are rising rapidly, Karnataka is yet to receive 960 more ventilators approved under the PM Cares scheme

State government is all set to inaugurate Karnataka's first plasma bank on Tuesday

REPORTS: P4

6 clades of SARS-CoV-2 virus identified in K'taka

Ajith MS @Mysuru

White senior officials managing the pandemic had denied the existence of multiple strains of Sars-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid19, a three-month study by Bengaluru-based NIMHANS that went on till June 1 has found that in Karnataka there are six different clades from which various strains exist as subsets that indicates the existence of several strains of the virus that could pose a challenge in treatment. P5

LOCKDOWN NOT TO CONTINUE: MINISTERS

SPECIAL HALLS FOR COVID +VE TO WRITE CET

Bengaluru: Even as the clamour against holding Karnataka CET 2020 gets louder, the state government has announced that Covid-positive students can write the test in special halls. The staff handling such students have been informed about protocols for precautionary measures. The CET will be held on July 30 and 31, as scheduled. Students are expected to be present two hours in advance and are allowed to carry their tiffin boxes. Three feet distance has to be maintained in the exam hall, and only two students can be seated per bench.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE week-long lockdown announced in Bengaluru to contain the spread of the Covid -19 is unlikely to continue beyond 5 am on Wednesday. "We discussed all measures to be taken in Bengaluru and there was no discussion about the lockdown.

That means the lockdown will not be continued and people can go about their normal routine as usual," Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar told reporters after Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa's marathon meeting with the ministers in-charge of eight zones in the state capital.

Dr Sudhakar, however, said Sunday lockdown and night curfew will continue and all details related to the lockdown will be announced on Tuesday evening after the CM's meeting with ministers and officers. The CM has made it clear that lockdown will not be extended, he reiterated.

"There is no question of extending the lockdown beyond Wednesday," Urban Development Minister Byrati Basavaraj too told *The New Indian Express* after the meeting with the Chief Minister.

The lockdown announced last week will end on early Wednesday morning and the Chief Minister and most ministers in charge of zones in Bengaluru are not in favour of extending it.

Basavaraj said that during the meeting, the Chief Minister took details on the availability of beds, ventilators, Covid Care Centres and other facilities in all eight zones and sought suggestions from ministers.

On Wednesday and Thursday, the CM is holding separate meetings with ministers, senior officers and elected representatives (of all parties) from all zones.

THE BIG FIGHT

Govt ropes in 60 babus for virus battle

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @Bengaluru

NOW, it is up to the top officials to monitor and check the spread of Covid-19 in Bengaluru. The State government has roped in around 60 IAS, IPS and IFS officers and has given them specific tasks to fight the pandemic as the cases have been seeing a sharp spike in the State Capital. They have already got down to work.

Chief Secretary T M Vijay Bhaskar on Sunday issued another order constituting seven more teams jointly headed by 14 IAS and IPS officers to look into reservation of beds in private hospitals in Bengaluru.

The State government on Saturday transferred B H Anil Kumar and posted N Manjunatha Prasad as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Commissioner. Apart from the commissioner, there are seven IAS officers including Special Commissioners for Health, Revenue, Administration, Finance etc.

These babus are also part of the Covid task force teams. This apart, last week, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa appointed additional eight senior IAS officers to monitor eight zones of the BBMP.

Senior IAS officers who are heading BMTC, Bescom, BWSSB and other civic bodies along with Bengaluru Urban and Bengaluru Rural DCs are also given specific tasks and responsibilities.

Apart from Bengaluru City Police Commissioner, many IPS officers who are working as DCPs are also involved. P5

Dalit youth thrashed for touching bike of caste person in Vijayapura

MAHESH M GOUDAR @Vijayapura

A 28-year-old Dalit youth was thrashed for allegedly touching a two-wheeler belonging to an upper caste person at Minajgi village near Talikoti in Vijayapura, on Saturday.

Kashinath Talwar (28), a labourer, was going to work with his father when he was beaten up. In a police complaint, his father Yankappa said, "A group of villagers thrashed my son, accusing him of touching the motorcycle of an upper caste person that was parked near Channamma Circle. They also assaulted me, my daughter-in-law and granddaughter when we tried to rescue him. The assailants abused us and threatened to set the houses of our community on fire."

But the villagers alleged that Kashinath used to act indecently with women washing clothes near a water tank. They had warned him several times, but when he continued with his misbehaviour, enraged villagers beat him up, they said. A 27-year-old married woman lodged a police complaint against Kashinath.

Superintendent of Police Anupam Agrawal told *The New Indian Express*, "We have registered a case of assault under the SC, ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and other IPC sections against the accused. We have listed 13 people as accused, and summoned four for investigation. No arrests have been made."

He said, "Villagers complained to us saying the youth misbehaved with women. A woman lodged a complaint and a case was registered against him under IPC 354. We are yet to take Kashinath into custody."

Villagers beat up a Dalit man in Talikoti of Vijayapura | EXPRESS

Hosp mixes up bodies, shocks woman's kin

NAUSHAD BIJAPUR @Belagavi

AMID a barrage of complaints against mismanagement of Covid wards at Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS), a mix-up of bodies of Covid patients came to light on Monday.

Two days after the funeral of a 57-year-old woman Covid patient from Camp area in Belagavi which was performed by the Health Department staff in the presence of her relatives, the family got a call on Monday to collect her body again.

The deceased woman, an asthma patient, was a government employee from Belagavi and was undergoing treatment for respiratory illness and was shifted to BIMS after she tested positive for Covid. On July 18, she called up her son complaining that she was not being given oxygen though she was finding it hard to breathe. P5

Name-calling at whole new level in Rajasthan

RAJESH ASNANI & RICHA SHARMA @Jaipur/New Delhi

IN his sharpest attack on ousted state Congress unit chief Sachin Pilot yet, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot called him worthless and idle, who was out to topple his government.

"I knew he was *nikamma* (worthless) and *nakara* (idle). He was just creating enmity among people," Gehlot alleged, adding Pilot had been conspiring with the BJP over the last six months to unseat him.

" No one could believe he was capable of doing it. With an innocent face and good command over English and Hindi, he impressed the media. Though the people of Rajasthan knew the truth, we never questioned him, keeping party interest in mind. Nobody believed me when I said there was a plot to topple the government. He (Pilot) even used to say he has not come here to sell vegetables, but to become the CM," Gehlot said.

His vicious attack on Pilot is being seen as an attempt to send a message to the party high command to take the rebel leader out of Rajasthan if they want any rapprochement. Sources said Gehlot is aware that the leadership is still in touch with Pilot, much against his wishes.

There was further mudslinging as Congress MLA Giriraj Singh Malinga alleged he was offered ₹35 crore by Pilot to join the BJP. Malinga is amongst the six BSP MLAs who defected to the Congress last year. For his part, Pilot threatened to sue Malinga.

In the Rajasthan High Court, hearing resumed on the rebels' petition challenging the disqualification notices issued to 19 of them by Speaker C P Joshi last week. The court will continue its hearing on Tuesday and subsequently pronounce its order. P9

Proposal to conduct LS, RS monsoon sessions separately

RICHA SHARMA @New Delhi

BOTH Houses of Parliament may be convened separately during the upcoming monsoon session and chambers of both could be used to seat members to ensure physical distancing at the time of Covid.

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla met on Monday and discussed a new option for accommodating MPs for the monsoon session, which is to be held either late August or early September. They inspected the chambers and galleries of both the Houses to assess the seating capacity as per the physical distancing norm.

"The proposal considered was that members of Lok Sabha would be seated in the chambers of both the Houses while Lok Sabha is in session. It will be the same with Rajya Sabha sessions too," said sources. The Rajya Sabha's chamber and its galleries can accommodate 127 members with physical distance while Lok Sabha's chambers and its galleries can seat about 290.

"Members of each of the two Houses who can't be accommodated in the chambers and galleries of their respective House would be seated in the chambers and galleries of the other House," they added.

Various logistical and technical issues were identified if this option were to be exercised, like enabling participation of the members of a House seated in the other House through audio-visual connectivity and audio facilities for members seated in galleries among others.

EXPRESS READ

Oxford vaccine shows promising results

London: A coronavirus vaccine, developed by the University of Oxford, has thrown up promising results. Trials on 1,077 subjects showed that the injection led to the production of antibodies and T-cells that can fight the virus. The vaccine appears to be safe, BBC has reported.

Cut-off date could be built into Covid loan restructuring

ANURADHA SHUKLA @New Delhi

WITH the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) expected to come up with a one-time loan restructuring by August first week to help businesses bogged down by the Covid-19 pandemic, the finance ministry has proposed a time-frame for loans to be eligible for the scheme.

According to sources, the ministry is in favour of allowing loans taken up to six months before the lockdown to be restructured by banks.

The proposal will be sent to the banking regulator for taking the final call.

"In the last meeting, RBI wanted loan restructuring to exclude already stressed sectors such as real estate, telecom and power to avoid misuse of the restructuring scheme. One solution discussed was to narrow down the timeframe of loans," a senior official from the finance ministry, who was part of the discussion with RBI, told *TNIE*.

According to the ministry's proposal, the scheme will cover loans from companies that have defaulted between October 2019 and December 2020 and such accounts will continue as standard accounts, the official explained.

While the timeframe may exclude some businesses, the official claimed it will include sectors that have been directly impacted by the pandemic such as travel, hospitality, large manufacturing, consumer goods, and aviation.

However, all this is subject to the central bank's approval.

The one-time restructuring will also exclude MSMEs, for which the Centre has announced separate schemes.

According to sources, RBI is cautious about one-time restructuring because of its past experience with such plans.

During the 2008 crisis, RBI had offered similar restructuring but it led to shooting up of non-performing assets.

According to the recent study by CLSA, 70% of restructuring during the FY08-FY18 decade turned NPAs and only 25-30% recovered to standard loans.

WHY BANKS WANT IT

Restructuring allows banks to modify the terms of loans such as repayment period, repayable amount, number of instalments, or rate of interest to help borrowers undergoing financial stress